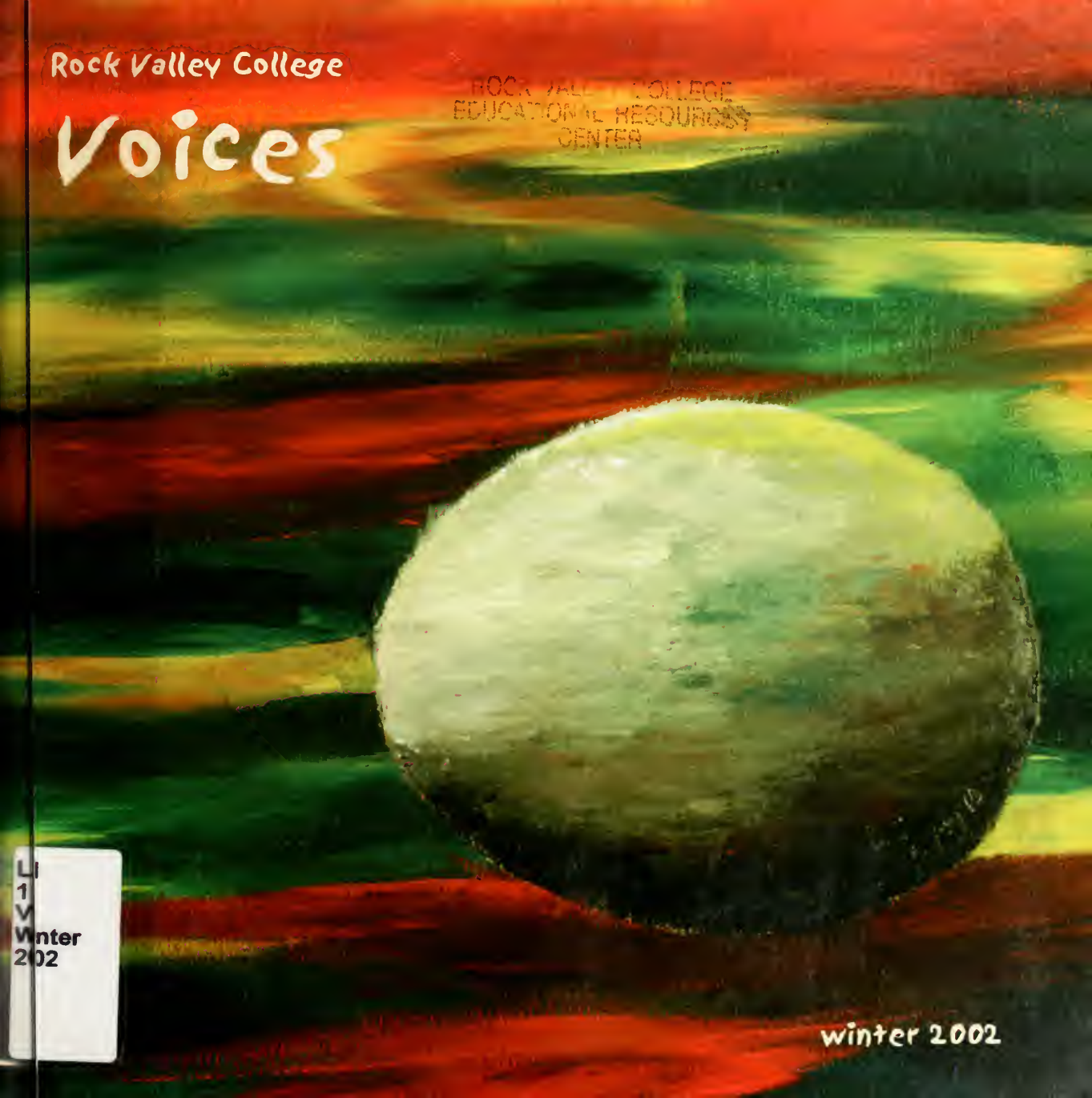
Rock Valley College

Voices

ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
CENTER



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Winter
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winter 2002

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Voices accepts for consideration submissions of poetry and fiction, as well as artwork in any form. Send submissions, along with a short biography and a SASE to: **Editors, Voices, Division of Composition and Literature, Rock Valley College, Rockford, IL 61114.** *Voices* assumes no responsibility for unsolicited contributions. *Voices* is published twice yearly by Rock Valley College. To become an editor, **enroll in JRN 139 - Small Magazine Production**. This 2-credit course is offered every semester. For information, call (815) 921-3315.

Cover Art by Anousone Panyanouvong

Welcome to My World

They say my eyes are like watching the sun rise. The outer color a dark blue leading to a fiery yellow center. They ask if they're fake; I wonder if they know me at all. Logical thought takes over and I walk away. They don't know how close they were.

They tell me I'm like a tornado, all this power building up in the center. I tell them to check out my melody; it's nothing like a natural disaster. I like to think of myself as a haven for lost souls, I have room for one more if you're available.

They say my energy shines through my smile. I ask them what that's like; heaven in the dark. I guess it's hot in heaven. I think I lost my soul back there at the gates.

They tell me I'm beautiful, every day. I think they don't know me very well. Beautiful people don't scream out at night, looking for the cause. Beautiful people have nothing else; I like to think I'm rich. Beautiful people are hard, but I have so many curves.

They say I'm perfect. Perfection isn't ugly.

Brooke Funfsinn

2 Poems by
Erin Monette

Reality Check

I always wait by the streetlight. The one whose bulbs have almost died. I think they call the color jaundice. Hanging on by a thread of consciousness that prevents it from turning off. Please don't pull the plug. When will the screensaver come on and save me?

Like a bad Ayn Rand novel, where everyone is the same. Why do you need a streetlight when your bleach blond hair lights up the alley, and your overpowering voice, and mind blowing good looks. Maybe it'll brush off on me. Osmosis of the personality, I've seen it happen.

Ever hear the term conceit, does it ring familiar in your middle name? Could I blow you over with my words, or would you turn your head and let the wind through? Does a harsh storm knock down your powerlines, causing your mind to stop? With your biological clock ticking at 12:00 12:00 12:00. Why does time not exist in your black hole?

Reality is red. Blond is the color of superiority. Now I will press these shadows into your mind to soften the corners. It looks a little empty in there.

LaToya Marble

Mask

My hand reaches for your shadow
I trace the contour of your cheek
Down your throat
Feeling your pulse beat
This life you call me
Credit undeserved, but willingly I'll take
Your fingers begin to dance
magic across my skin,
My lips quiver for the comfort of yours.
Your lips control mine
And when you stop me
From spinning
My mask slips
Letting you see me
for an instant.
Before I cover myself up
And leave.

Ode to the Bitch

Ode to the Bitch
who walks around
knowing that
all are watching her,
as she talks to her other
"friends."
She uses the pose
her mother taught her.
The one that says
"I know you're watching,
and I know you enjoy it."
Ode to the Bitch
who smirks at my errors
who laughs at my eagerness
who mimics my
vulnerability.
She remembers what her
mother said: "There is no
one else like you- make sure
they know it."
Ode to the Bitch
who is unrelentless in my
gaining that knowledge.
Pushing it down my throat,
invading my mind with the
garbage that only I can
smell.
I spit it out, she looks on in
disgust.
Ode to the Bitch
that is me.

3 Poems by Erin Monette

Should I be Ashamed?

Should I be ashamed of
who I am
When who I am is a
product of this world?
Should I be ashamed of
what I've done
When what I've done has
been a result of your
pressure?
Should I be ashamed of
what I say
When what I say is what
I hear?
Should I be ashamed of
who I know
When who I know is who
you've introduced me to?
Should I be ashamed of
my choices
When they were the only
ones given to me?
Should I be ashamed that
I want to be different
When you told me to be
unique?
Should I be ashamed of
what I do
When I do them for your
attention?

Still Here

Love Wasted
Love dead
It grew smaller
long ago
But it was still
there
It got trampled
on
Screamed at
Sidetracked
Shifted
But it was still
there
It kept popping
up it's head
When you
thought
it wouldn't
When it was
uninvited
When you
wanted to
hate
But it was still
there
I thought I
killed it
I just want it to
disappear
Never to see it
again
From you
But it is still here

– Bill Schafer

Thomas Stegall

JACK

see jack
see jack run
run jack run
run from the pain
run from the image
the image you have
the image isn't you
you are you
aren't you

see jack
see jack lie
lie jack lie
lie to make friends
lie to make enemies
the enemy is you
the enemy inside you
you are you
aren't you

see jack
see jack hurt
hurt jack hurt
hurt from the lies
hurt from the truth
the truth is here
the truth is everywhere
you are you
aren't you

see jack
see jack bleed
bleed jack bleed
bleed from the lies
bleed from the wounds
the wounds are real
the wounds are invisible
you are you
aren't you

see jack
see jack die
die jack die
die from the truth
die from the scars
the scars are deep
the scars won't scab
you are you
aren't you

see jack
see jack
jack is jack
jack is a liar
jack is a fake
the fake is jack
the fake is dying
who are you
aren't you jack

SELF PORTRAIT

Apocalyptic urge
The bloodlust seeped in easily
The goal is plain

The energy swept through
Adrenaline sharpened senses
Searching for more

The punch was thrown so wild
Anger punctuating intent
Regret unknown

The damage is now done
Emotions pushing desire
Free from all thought

The action was primal
Unerring true energy
Too fast for now

The thoughts clear from logic
Focused mind finding its target
The mark in range

The mind breach is sealed
Redirected energy turns
Becoming me

4 Poems by Ed Rader

TRUTH

Do you love me
can I finish
Obviously you love me
Where was I
I never said that
No that's not what I said
I meant
Yes exactly

Why is that the way
What about love
No wait
But yeah
That's right
That's the answer I gave
Didn't I ask that question
The words are turned around
I just said that
So we agree
Yes exactly

I just said that
My words were wrong
You understand
Well maybe I said it wrong
Yes exactly

That's what I meant
Yeah that's it totally
Yes exactly

That's what I said at the beginning
Yes exactly

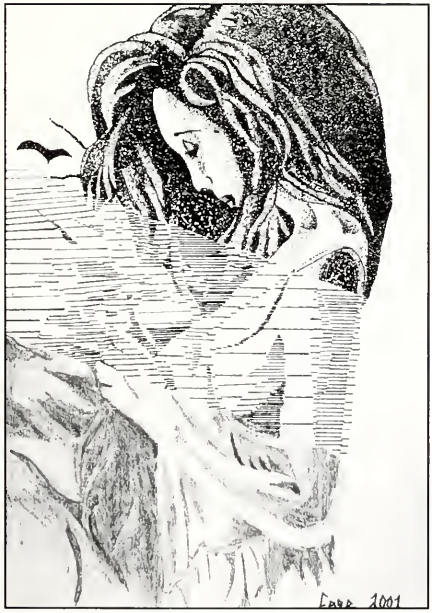
Yes exactly

Exactly

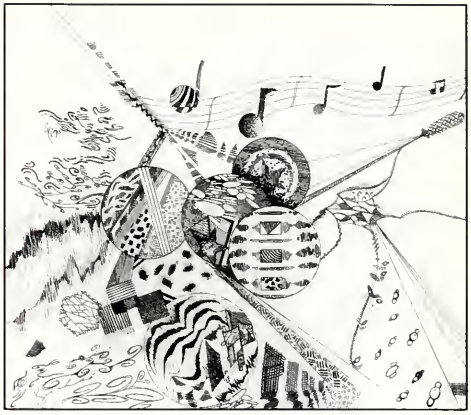
Jill
Jill girl
Jill girl hurt
Jill girl hurt scared
Jill girl hurt scared scarred
Jill girl hurt scared scarred untrusting
Jill girl hurt scared scarred untrusting unloved
Jill girl hurt scared scarred untrusting unloved unhappy
Jill girl hurt scared scarred untrusting unloved unhappy alone
Jill girl hurt scared scarred untrusting unloved unhappy alone
girl hurt scared scarred untrusting unloved unhappy alone
hurt scared scarred untrusting unloved unhappy alone
scared scarred untrusting unloved unhappy alone
scarred untrusting unloved unhappy alone
untrusting unloved unhappy alone
unloved unhappy alone
unhappy alone
alone

Jill
girl
hurt
scared
scarred
untrusting
unloved
unhappy
alone

Jill alone



Christine Case



Brooke Funfsinn

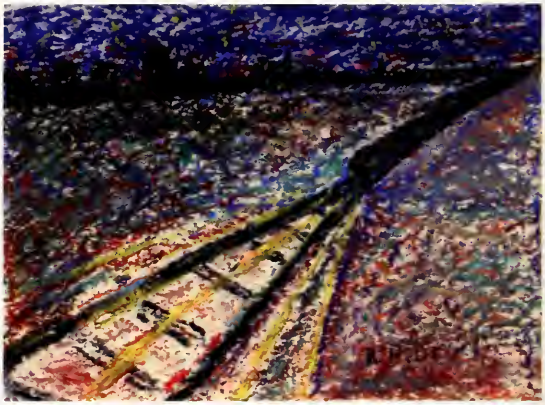
Meditation

Resting on my bed
With the window open wide
The sun is apple red
And the clouds float on the tide
The soft and sweet aroma
Of the sweetened coffee cup
Puts me in a coma
Just before the night is up
The sound of northern loons
And the water rolling in
Surrounded by the tunes
Of a thousand violins
No bright light above me
Just a lamp beside my head
I drift asleep so quickly
Not to wake 'till moon falls dead.

– Derek Vore

Brooke Funfsinn

She- observing the man in my eyes
Under a tear filled moon
I- completed in her
Alone, yet complete
Away, yet complete
And the man in the moon
cries
my
eyes
out



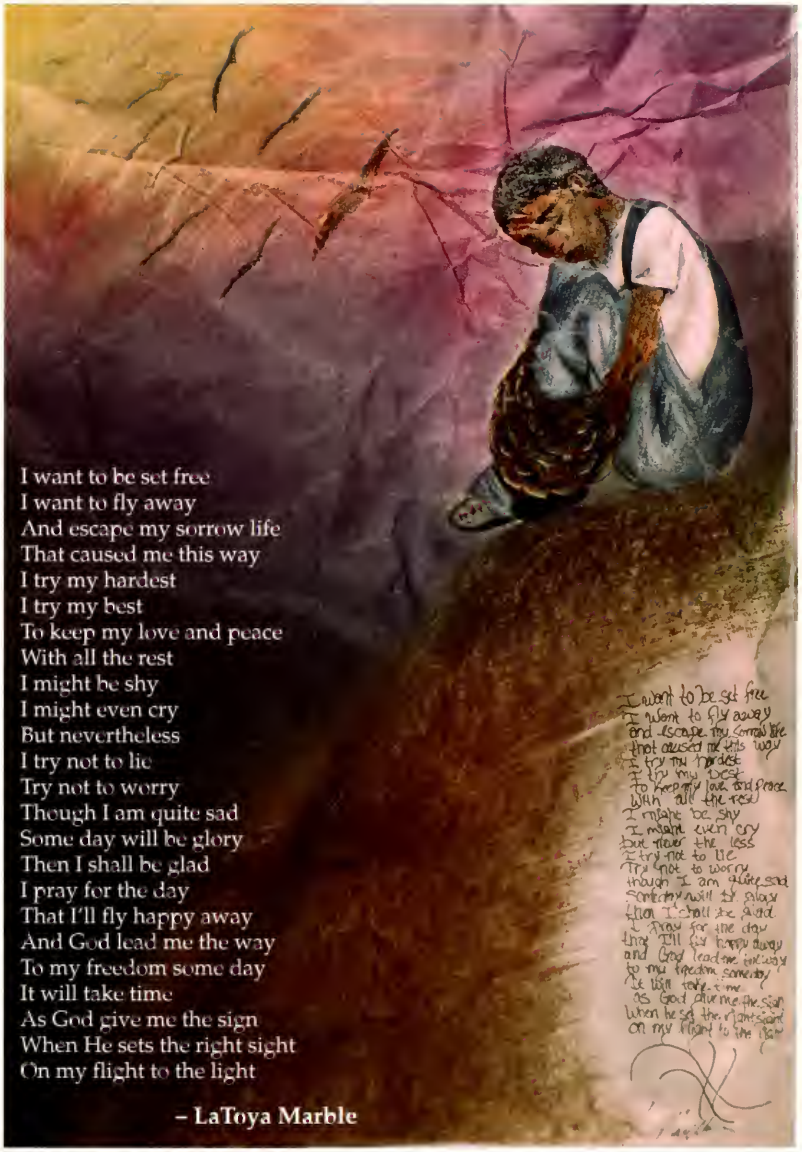
R. Felse

R. Felse

Man and woman
Endlessly in arms
Living off the other
Young lust and love
Sleeping
Silently
Always falling up

Candles burning over
the sex of sleep
Incomplete thoughts
and distorted lines
Running parallel
And the candles melt
And the lines run
And the boy sleeps
And the girls dream
And the skies open
And tick tock
And and and
And logs burning
And smoke bellowing
And night timing
And you
And empty dripping
And cricketing
And you and
And the sheeps leaping
And left right left left right
And and and
And beautiful
Slowly, faster, and more
Into the orgasm of wake.

3 Poems by Paul Mannone



Hypothesis

The parachute-free freefall was a competition between Alex's acid-induced conviction that he was in fact Magneto, archenemy of the X-Men, and Newton's conviction that gravity- induced deceleration trauma would occur upon the termination of the fall. It didn't really help Alex's side much that nothing metal was in the immediate vicinity, but given a few seconds of falling, he was sure he would think of something. After all, he was an evil genius.

Even Newton agreed that Alex would get his few seconds. The plane had been several miles in the air, and Alex/Magneto's plummet could only accelerate at 9.8 meters per second. What Newton really took issue with was the idea that certain people (namely, villains whose presence was necessary for a story arc) were immune to universal gravitation. Not that Newton didn't enjoy the X-Men as much as any other physics and math loving nerd, but he'd spent years thinking up his positions on physics, and he was dammed if he was going to have thought up merely a Law of Not-So-Universal Gravitation.

Alex, on the other hand, was perfectly sure he would not make a sound resembling the onomatopoeic word "splat" upon the conclusion of the fall. Not only that, he rather thought he might not reach the ground at all. After all, 1000 feet into the descent, he felt weightless, and really didn't even think he was falling. Surely, he thought, the ground's seeming to get closer was only an optical illusion. It was at this point that he started to try to figure out it there was anything metal nearby. Not that he was really worried that anything could happen to him, but he wanted to be sure. Maybe, he thought, he could work it into some sort of gigantic safety net or some other bizarre, life-saving thing if he had had enough.

Newton would have liked to have pointed out to Alex at this point that Alex had not in actuality manipulated any objects with his mind for the 22 year duration of his life, but Alex had considered this objection before ever jumping out of the plane and discarding the parachute. He was just beginning to realize his powers, and the fact that this realization had occurred only after he had dropped the acid was purely coincidental. His eye started darting around a little more quickly now, looking for a way to stop the fall that was by now obviously bringing him closer to the cornfields of eastern Nebraska with every passing second.

5000 feet to go.

Alex put his arms above his head, feeling all of his power surging through him. He hadn't realized until now how absolutely great it was to know that if you're needed for plot development, no one will let you die in a manner completely irrelevant to the rest of the story line. However, at this point, he realized that he might not be able to stop his fall, and he wandered vaguely what would save him.

4000 feet to go.

He wasn't accelerating any more, Newton could have told him that. He had reached a point knows as terminal velocity many feet before. Because of this, the ground was approaching at a constant rate. His mild

curiosity was beginning to wane, as he just experienced his very first flicker of doubt as to his own invincibility. Oh, come on, his brain had reminded him upon this faltering, No writer worth his salt would kill you like this. That was a comfort, anyhow.

3000 feet.

It was kind of odd, thought Alex, but once you experienced a few thousand feet of freefall, it's pretty much all the same. His doubt vanished. Not only was the fall not worrisome, it was becoming boring. He began to think of how he would miraculously land – yeah, that'd maybe be an acceptable thing for the writers to do. He decided he'd try to land straight up, on his feet.

2000 feet.

Alex began to notice the people on the ground below. He conjectured that perhaps one of them would save him from the little problem with the sudden stop and all. The thing was, all he saw were a couple of farmers in the fields and the little kids walking down a two-lane highway. Surely not anyone he knew, and unless the writers were about introduce a new character, these people below him weren't going to help.

1000 feet.

Which is why he began to panic. His brain was racing. Of course he didn't have to think of physics, of course he was immune to it all. Weren't all comic book characters? He was starting to think, though, that maybe it would have been a much, much better thing not to have jumped out of the plane in the first place.

500.

250.

100.

50.

Well, now would be a good time for a dramatic rescue, he thought.

10.

Oh, shit.

0.

Alex's fall was stopped in less than .1 seconds, and sure enough, it turned out it wasn't the fall that killed him, it was the sudden stop. He made quite a dent in the ground before the flattening effect caused his body to become scattered for a radius of a hundred feet or so. Newton observed the mess on the ground and smiled faintly. How many times did he have to tell people? Gravity's not just a good idea. It's the law.

by Jeanette Vanderbosch

Anousone Panyanouvong

To You would be Pirates and Mercenaries

For those who seek
Grand adventure, or
Far~away treasure,
Excitement to make your
Heart flutter and skip
I invite you~
Come one and all,
Explore the dangers
Of my living room

I tackle man~eating gators,
Drive lightning quick race cars,
And save the dear duchess~
Daily

Why, just this morning,
While drinking my coffee,
(my eyes barely open)
A flood filled my house!
And while the furniture
Floated from room to room,
We swam like fish till noon

Not only a physical
Test of exertion
But mental stamina
As well
~These constant illogical arguments
Make my poor brain
Puddle with sweat
(worse than any on Usenet!)

So, those who feel
Up to the Challenge,
Come by, visit me
I live between Gotham City
And Puddle~by~the~Sea!

– Janell Wehr

Painting by Mary Webb

No. 4
(Gotta love that Sally D)

The moment I knew all
(and lost all other knowledge)
I ran like hell.

Ah, her oddly familiar voice
Resonates through the soul
Basic communication of cells.

Hear the mitochondria speak,
Voice like an old set of skin, yet
Newborn to the conscience

Clinging like ego, like cat in a tree,
Choosing charade over simple truth
Finally this place becomes whole again

And I forget all, except fear,
I even forget my self.
Eerily, it takes an alien plastic

Feel, like ladies retro fashion mags,
"... but it is not real, anyhow ..."
She gives me this talisman, a souvenir.

So, how does this psychonaunt
Find her way home? But with
New eyes, home found me

– Janell Wehr

Ray Manis

2 Poems by Randal T. Schultz

I lost myself again,
Thinking of Birdmen,
Dead friends, and you.
The weepy music is playin
On the radio,
And it's turned into
Another rainy day
It's ok though,
I can still smile
And mean it.

Halogen bulbs hang,
Clustered like flowers
Below blades
Spinning after each other.
I wonder
If they know
They're going in circles.
I wonder
If anyone knows
They're going in circles.
Thank God
For
Interventions.

How I Dealt with the Terrorists When They Came For Me

The terrorists broke into my room last night,
While I was whistling America the Beautiful.
I was thinking of the Purple Mountains and the Yellow River,
And I had to go to the bathroom.

That's how the terrorists sneak in,
When natural yearnings of the body, carnal needs,
Fat farts, gross hungers, and other everyday weaknesses
Lower our guards and unlock our secrets.

There are too many tunnels to shut them all,
Though by humming Ray Charles, many things become possible.
I gave myself over, in the night, to the surveillance of enforcers,
to the wire taps that plug directly into my brain,

But the terrorists kept coming. I called out to them:
Halt! Meiner Enemies. I defy you with my unity and the depth
Of my grief. But they didn't speak English, and I could tell
By their teeth that they were not amused.

How I wept over other people's sorrows.
I apologized for my joys out loud, ran disclaimers
Beneath every happy moment. How I hurt for anonymous
Wounds watched on TV in between the funny commercials.

That Brittany Spears is a cutie, too.
I can see why the president's pants might light on fire.
He can blame the terrorists if he wants to.
But everyone knows that Pepsi is really to blame.

I woke up in a cold glee, grateful that I had been only dreaming.
But it wasn't a dream at all. The terrorists were only in my kitchen,
Making pancakes. Imagine me, gleeful and cold, eating pancakes
With the terrorists. It was too terrible for words.

I confronted them after my second helping,
Told them to get out of my house or I'd call the police.
Police, I cried, Secret Service! The terrorists are here, in my kitchen,
Eating pancakes! They rose slowly, too full to move fast.

Josh Parks

Now I am plotting my revenge.
I have become the noble
Count of Monte Christo,
rich beyond kingdoms and
Angry as hell. I am sprinkling cornflakes
in the courtyard
Before my window, so the terrorists will
crunch loudly

If they dare to return.
And if they stay away, let the
Birds have the cornflakes, I say.
I am generous that way.
I am always giving, always thinking of
the other guy.
I can't imagine why the terrorists are after me.

– Jeffrey Michels

Tolerance

She laughed at the axe murderer.
And the woman whose husband,
named Seaman,
had gone after her with his
bare hands
giggled as she read the headline:
"Woman Choked to Death
by Seaman"

they say 45 percent of people think
reporters are more cynical
than the rest of us.

And 54 percent of reporters think so.

And you can't blame them, really.
After you've seen one gruesome
death scene
you've really seen them all.

That's what she thought.

but her laughs died
a sudden death
on a cold, bright Tuesday morning
and she found
that she wasn't prepared for

She doesn't work anymore.
She keeps her TV silent.
She won't listen to the news reports
or gossip of the political-minded

and she can't sleep
except for the drugs

Until she builds up a tolerance.

– **Jeanette Vanderbosch**

Raven Johnson

Nature

A Symphony for my life.

Surveying
Designing, digging, planting,
Watering , weeding,

Sleeping, creeping, leaping

Lamb's ear velvet beckoning my touch
Purple coral bells calling to the wind
Dew drops puddling on the milk weed's pods
Dragon's blood extending its tongue

Gay-feather liatris bursting with color
Spring snow painting a border
Partnering with grape hyacinth,
White narcissus and daffodils

Yellow coreopsis and stellas
Purple coneflowers and Siberian iris
White baby's breath and lilies of the valley
Pink peonies and autumn joy sedum

Providing a symphony for my life

– Pat Benedict

Anousone Panyanouvong

Maybe

Yesterday's history
Monopolized my night
And altered today.
Tomorrow is free
Not promised
Just free

Maybe

My Poem

It is after midnight, and
the words.
Thoughts,
Phrases,
And ideas
Do not come.
The poet
Who me?
Rhyme, rhythm, repetition,
Metaphors and similes
Not here.
Milton, Tennyson,
Wordsworth,
Browning, T. S.,
Your poetry here for the
ages,
Written for the senses
Drawing me close yet
Eluding my pen
And I,
I will leave the poetry
writing to you.

2 Poems by Pat Benedict

Marc Dull

ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE - ERC

Letter to an Angel

Raymond Neil needs his letter now
since times will make us great or small,
I'll fence my life and send him some
my postage done he'll pause upon
the facts I sent, my crucial terms,
and match them up with all he's learned

With Raymond's youth and innocence
a flight of birds will leave a chance
of patterns formed, too soon from God
He'll look back wondering, where he was

I see him now, as far away
He'll jostle off his tiny clothes and
Upward look to see the hill he fell
Upon, that left him here

Raymond I want to send you back
no thought unkind, I've loved you since
in my old woods you told me why
each leaf was placed against the sky

The peace you have will bring you hate
from jealous men who've lost their lives
Your freedom Raymond, it's what they want
and men will kill, if not possess

Run, Raymond run, this world is mad
too much sorrow for one who has
his tiny clothes and upward glance
a sparrow fallen from a branch

I love you Raymond, and others must
up on that hill you tumbled from
they'll wait for you, they know you're small,
but in your coat you carry with,
every bit of love there is

4 Poems by Mike Marchal

A Poem of Life

A poem of
to interweave
that time I know
like autumn leaves

A poem for me
so I'll recall
that loneliness
is centered
on a wheel
from which we
all expand, contracting
as we write
our song,
and wait
for those who listen

Amy L. Foster

Untitled

word on word we trade
lines drawn,
homeward bound
then
I
can feel
mistakes,
to live
to love,
a
man must
touch
and
moving on
we start again
word on word
we trade

Wendy

I hurry down
to delve around
My basement floor
a fact to find

A faucet crack
slow but intense
A downward flow
to give it sense

The window opens
to a breeze
And underside
is up to me

Without a thought
my fact I'll find
Without a thought
she'll change her mind

On Forests

Trees, the earth's comfortable fleece of soft green leaves-
what poetry do they speak in their long, slow tongue?
What is it their infinite patience allows them
that we humans are unable to hear?
What do they know in their grand, unassuming silence
that we miss in our brief, frenzied flurry of living?

Even enduring that which in human language
would be called atrocity - mass leveling
of the still societies we call forests -
their sadness is given only the briefest
of voices: loud, creaking moans of agony,
which fade into a terribly audible silence.

Even at the end of their biological lives,
they speak their wisdom to us
as we form their very fibers
into shapes of our desires -

the austerity of the log cabin,
the bittersweet song of the cello,
the satisfying *crack* of a baseball bat

as thousands of fans cheer on
the greatest of their human counterparts.

Ray Manis

Study in Nonsense #2 - in the Style of Nostradamus, Sort of

When the time comes there will be
nobody to pass out the pinecones of desire,
nobody to love you for who you aren't.

And not only will you be caught on the
Winds of Salt, but you will also be
thoroughly drenched in lymph and mud.

Excursions in ambiance will net nothing but confusion.
Giant plastic milk crates will fall from the sky
and water the garden of the flowers of Indignity.

Untitled #1

Downward, downward, spriraling inward,
leeway, leeway, get out of the way!
Moving, searching, eagerly lurking,
spinning, thriving and equally dying.

Sideways, no ways, wherever it please,
backward, downward, never to cease.
Inward, outward, slinking toward
a distant horizon, an open door.

Untitled #2

To to is to know
and to of is to follow.
To in is to be
as to out is to hide.

We question when we but,
we give when we for.
I wait when I before,
I stop when I after.

Soon is nervous
now is angry
never is inconsolable.

4 Poems by
Adam Bevers

Raven Johnson

a frustrated cry from a desperate heart

try having a hap hazardous
horror
once in a while, through most
of your life
until you grow old enough
that
it all becomes just another
torturous memory
stored
always in the back of your
mind
and see how easy it is to get
through the night
I CAN'T EVER SLEEP
so once again i feel the need
to spike my sour veins
with this brown sugar poison
to feel alive
to feel that sweetness of a
world of dreams

– Joseph Duncan

Red, White, and Blue

Anger, fury, rage
Rushing, wage on war.
Overwhelming human need
to even the score,
But who will really benefit
from the horror and gore.

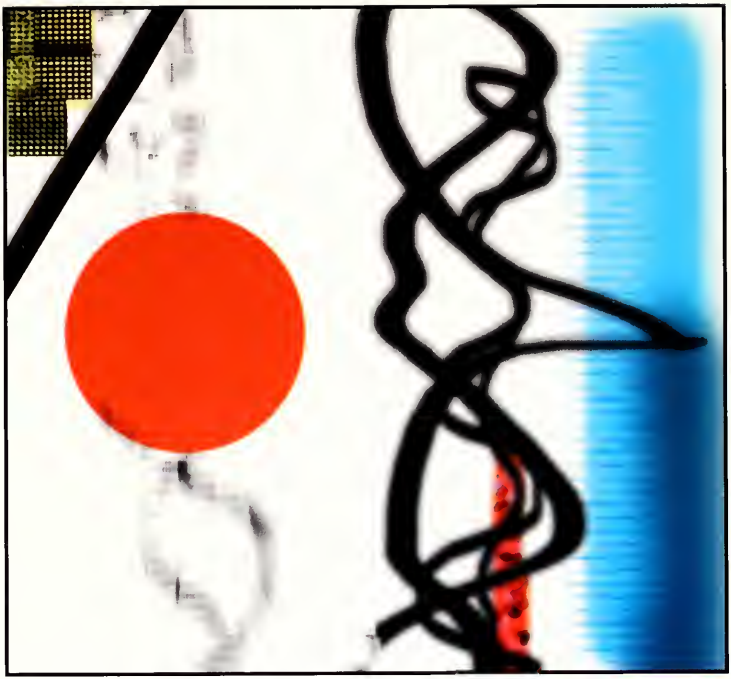
Family losses are great,
United we, send the sons out
for bait.
Grieving families are not
done growing,
As the anger of a Nation
keeps flowing.

Vengeance is well thought
out,
Growing to fuel the fire.
United we, will not point
fingers and shout,
Until we find the hit man up
for hire.

Tooth for a tooth, eye for an eye,
Life for a life,
This will be our Nation's reply.

– Christina Bauer

Ray Manis



James Dewitz

EARS PIERCED
YOUR CHOICE
WITH OR WITHOUT
PAIN

WELCOME TO
NEW YORK CITY

PLEASE KEEP YOUR
SMALL-TOWN
SYMPATHY
INSIDE THE VEHICLE
AT ALL TIMES.

Two Days After

Somewhere inside of me,
I lie curled up, weeping,
Inconsolable, afraid, alone.

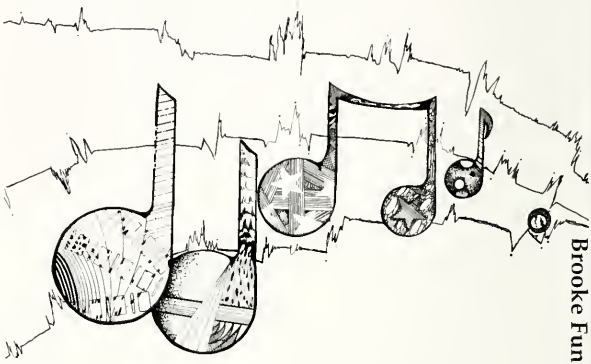
I weep for loss:
Of peace, of joy,
Buried in the rubble of my soul
With little hope of rescue.

– Karen Flowers

good-bye my friend

i see my parents leaving me for a week with strangers
the baby-sitter's new and I don't like the way she smiles
i know we've been fighting and the slam of good-bye shakes me
maybe i'll leave too as soon as the car door shuts
i'll keep an eye on the gang and keep them in line
they're used to you like breakfast
but skipping meals is nothing new to them
their stomachs adjust in time

your lecture ended abruptly
the bell surprised me
even though you tried
you know you sped
the pace was reckless
and now you're arrested
while we're left with notes of our own taking
and things will be fine
things will be fine
things will be fine



i want to say we love you but such clichés are overused
i want to carry whatever you left and my memories of course
i recall your great uncle the literate slave whose owners hung him
so that generations after would remember and learn
i recall your father the basketball coach who took his black team
through racist refs to the state championships
i recall your feet and your twisted office and the way you gave
your breath to others
your voice
your rhythm
your spirit

miss caryl jean brown

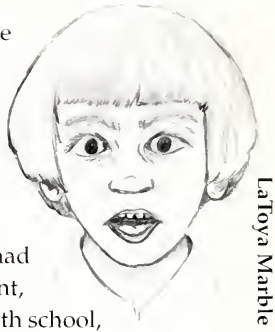
Poems Inspired by Kanwal Prashar and Ed Rader

Brooke Funfsinn

Can
Autumn
Really
Yet
Laugh
Joyful
Even
Acknowledging
Now
Blessings
Raining
O'er
Woman
No more

Finding Simon Roe

by Moriah Caliendo



LaToya Marble

Standing, stagnating water has always made me nervous. Finding Simon Roe did not alleviate this feeling in any way. In fact, finding Simon Roe antagonized my feelings of discomfort brought on by ponds and pools of unmoving, dank liquids. But finding him, in spite of adding to that discomfort, taught me a lot about true friendship.

The day we found Simon Roe, my best friend Paula and I skipped school. It was late April, and we were becoming more and more antsy, in anticipation of our summer vacation from St. Catherine's Catholic Girls' Academy. Skipping school had become sort of a habit for Paula and me. Paula had just found out she was pregnant, and would not return to St. Catherine's for the next term in the fall. I was bored with school, and annoyed by my classmates. Paula and I spent a bit more time skipping school and going to the forest preserve than we probably should have, in retrospect, but I cannot say that it was time ill spent.

Late April in northern Louisiana is an uncomfortable time of year. The air is thick with humidity, heat, and insects. We felt smothered in our uniforms, and shed as much of them as was decently possible. The windows of Paula's Chevette were rolled down, but spared us little relief from the heat as we sped up the highway. The breeze stuck loose hairs from our ponytails to our sweaty necks, and Paula lit a cigarette.

I frowned at her as the smoke danced around the air inside the Chevette. "Isn't that bad for the baby?"

Paula tossed her head and shot me a glare. "I guess so, Mom," she replied glibly and tipped the butt out the window.

She pulled the Chevette up into the parking lot at the north end of the forest preserve and killed the stuttering engine. She glared at the steering wheel. "Damn piece of junk," she muttered, and opened the door. We stepped out into the heavy air which throbbed with the sound of passing semis. We closed the doors and started up the rocky trail to the outlook, our dowdy St. Catherine's shoes clacking with every step. The sound did not echo far, for the air absorbed the sharp sounds and turned them soft.

About halfway to the lookout tower that was our usual destination, we had to leave the trail and slip past a pair of live oaks that hung heavy with moss. The ground to the left was swampy and wet, like the edge of a fen.

The April that was nearly past had been particularly wet and rainy in northern Louisiana, and the swampy area was soupier than usual. The water was still and murky, and very unnerving to both of us. Mosquitoes buzzed hungrily over it, waiting for live flesh. The live oaks cast shadows over the area, and if Simon Roe had not been wearing his slick, white Nikes, he may never have been seen. In the darkness and muck, there was a sliver of white where white was unlikely. "Hey Paul, what is that?"

She stopped walking. The beads in her hair swung together and clicked once more, the sound almost immediately muted by the damp air. I stopped behind her, and we both stared. We stared at Simon Roe's white Nike for a good five minutes before we could look away. I looked at Paula and she looked at me, both our faces white with horror. I have never seen a black girl look as pale as Paula did then. Not Michael Jackson at any point, and not even Paula when she realized she was pregnant and would have to tell her mother.

"I think it's a shoe," she whispered in a gasp.

"Yes. I think so, too."

"Well, go see if it is on someone's foot," she whispered, still in that spooky gasp.

Without even considering saying no, I shucked my St. Catherine's shoes and waded slow and zombie-like into the slop. Muck sucked at my feet and decaying leaves poked at my soles through the thin nylon of my socks. I looked back at Paula, who was still standing on solid ground. She was still looking pasty, her pregnant belly pooching out over the top of her navy blue wool skirt.

As I stepped a little closer, I could see the outline of a dark leg and the slope of buttocks and a back. I stepped closer, the murky water filtering in through my sock and assaulting my skin. I was shocked and intrigued, being only sixteen and never having seen anyone dead before.

"Is it?" Paula asked, her voice shaking slightly. I only nodded, unable to speak or look away.

At that point, Paula sat down and put her head on her knees. I heard the click of the beads in her hair, and when I was finally able to look away from the lifeless hump in the silent pool of murky water, Paula was fairly well balled up. Seeing her like that registered the situation in my mind, and I began to stumble backward frantically. The soft mud squelched between my toes and made a repulsive sucking noise as I pulled my feet loose from the mucky earth. Just as I was nearly back to Paula and the comforts of dry land, I lost my balance and landed flat on my backside in the puddle. The grimy water splashed up around me, spattering my face and shirt. Nearly hysterical, I was unable to take my eyes off the body, and I found it terribly upsetting that the ripples my clumsiness had made totally dissipated before they reached him. The water around the body of Simon Roe was still perfectly calm.

I pulled myself out of the muck and helped Paula to her feet. Without speaking, we walked as fast as a pregnant teenager and her shoeless best friend could go along the rocky trail back to the Chevette. Once safely inside, surrounded by familiar things and no stagnant puddles, Paula spoke. "Are you going to tell anyone?"

"I don't think so," I said, pulling a cigarette out of her pack and lighting it. I sucked a long, foul drag off of it and tossed it out the window. "Are you?"

"But you left your shoes," Paula said. "Someone will find him sooner or later and wonder why there are size 7 mary janes just laying around back there. They might think you killed him or something. And who do you think he is?"

"You know, Paul, I really don't care. You couldn't pay me anything to get me to go back there. I will think of something to tell my mom about my clothes, but I think we should just get out of here now."

Silently, Paula turned the key and put the car in gear. As we sped out of the forest preserve gates, I

noticed tears on her cheeks. They were sliding slowly down her dark skin, not standing still. I tried to smile, but it came off as more a grimace, I'm certain. "I love you, Paul."

"I love you, too." Without even looking at me.

Three nights later on the local news, the discovery of Simon Roe's body was announced. The news cameras showed the same dark hulk in the still water to the left of the live oaks. No policemen came to my door wanting to know why my shoes were found so close to the dead body of a missing boy. In fact, no mention of the size 7 mary janes was ever made in the investigation of Simon Roe's death.

I never asked Paula about them, and she never said anything. But throughout our friendship, I was intently aware of how uncomfortable still water made her, especially in the springtime. Though we never broached the subject of the shoes I had left in the forest preserve, I knew that she truly meant it when she said she loved me.

Thomas Stegall

CONTRIBUTORS

Cindy Almond is an RVC student trying to create a commune of diehard capitalists.
Pat Benedict is currently taking journalism classes to entertain herself.
Christina Bauer is finishing her AA at RVC and plans to start at Illinois State next fall.
Adam Bevers is an RVC student and an aspiring cellist.
Moriah Caliendo has been taking classes at RVC for 7 years. She aspires to be a perfusionist. Moriah won this issue's $100 Grand Prize for her short story.
Christine Case is a first-year student at RVC. Eventually, she plans to attend Northern to get her Art degree and become an Art teacher.
James Dewitz is an RVC student with a particular interest in computer graphics.
Marc Dull paints portraits and animals for hire. Call 877-8936 to schedule a sitting!
Joseph Duncan is a student in RVC's new Mass Communications Program.
Ramona Felse is a local artist currently taking classes at Rockford College.
Loren Fuller is an RVC student.
Karen Flowers is a student at RVC. She wrote her poem on September 13, 2001.
Amy L. Foster titles her drawing that appears in this issue: "Seasons of My Life."
Brooke Funfsinn, a third-year RVC student, aspires to be a graphic designer, a singer and a star. She recently sang the National Anthem at an Ice Hogs game.
Abby Hunt is the proud daughter of Becky Stien, secretary to the Comp. Lit. Division.
Raven Johnson is an RVC student who plans to go on to NIU to earn an Art Degree. She won this issue's Artistic Achievement Award, a $25 gift certificate to CD Source.
Rachel "Ray" Manis, a first-year RVC student, draws fantasy art.
Paul Mannone is an RVC student in the newly formed Mass Communications program who enjoys film, writing and reading poetry, and music of all sorts.
LaToya Marble, a student of fashion design, is proud to be a Golden Eagle.
Mike Marchal, a returning RVC student, plans to pursue a career in counseling.
Jeffrey Michels teaches JRN 139, the class that produces this magazine. Enroll now!
Erin Monette, this year's Vice President of the Arts and Literary Club, is a crazy redhead with plans to leave Rockford for life, with a degree in Public Relations.
Anousone Panyanouvong is a second-year RVC student originally from Laos.
Josh Parks is a first-year student at RVC, working towards a PCT degree.
Ed Rader, a perpetual student, usually burns all his writing ritualistically.
Randy Schultz is an RVC student who spends as little time as possible on campus.
Bill Schafer studies Computer Science at RVC.
Thomas Stegall is a police officer with RVC's department of Public Safety.
Elton Trojniar, a 3rd-year sophomore at RVC, plans to move on to Jedi training soon.
Jeanette Vanderbosch is a sometime writer, reporter, editor, and wannabe cult leader, and is this year's Arts and Literary Club president.
Derek Vore, in his first year at RVC, is a sexy guitarist with a creative mind.
Mary Webb is an RVC student who plans to someday open an art gallery.
Janell Wehr is a popular local poet who enjoys poetry for the freedom it offers.

CD SOURCE
congratulates
Raven Johnson
winner of
this issue's
Artistic Achievement Award

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Voices
congratulates
Moriah Caliendo
winner of
this issue's
$100 Grand Prize for Outstanding Contribution

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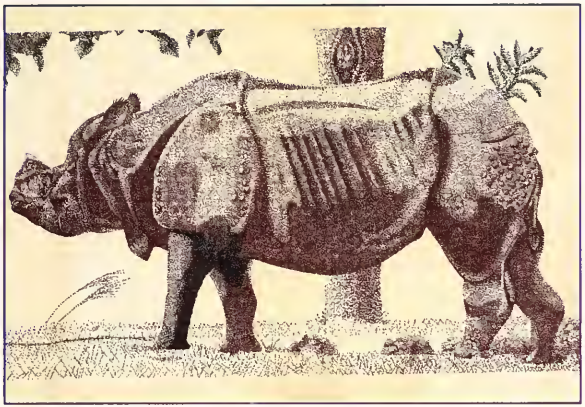

You don't need grace

A b

Mee 33!
C .

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ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE

DEMCO

Speci r Issue for RVC Kids!

Hello, My Mom

Hello my mom,
I'm here for you.
Hello my mom.
You're here for me too.
Hello my mom,
I love you so.
Hello my mom,
I know you know.
Hello my mom.
You're so cool.
Hello my mom,
You know you rule.
Hello my mom,
I love you so.
Hello my mom,
I know you know.

–Abby Hunt
Age 11

children of students, staff and faculty are invited to submit poems and drawings

Back Cover by James Dewitz

$2.00